

## **POVERTY: HEARTBREAKING CHOICES, EVERYDAY**

The Vincent de Paul Society Victoria (Vinnies) is today launching the 2018 Vinnies Winter Appeal, which will aim to educate the community about the lived experiences of poverty that are forcing vulnerable people to make heartbreaking choices, every day.

The campaign is centred on the story of Jenny, a young mother who has fled domestic violence to safeguard herself and two young children, and yet, is now left struggling to find a home and to afford the basic things they need to survive. Vinnies was fortunately there to extend a helping hand.

St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria CEO, Sue Cattermole, said this scenario is one that's replicated right across the state of Victoria and the lived experience of poverty, impacting the lives of over 725,000 residents, is often defined by a constant struggle for survival.

"We know all too well that poverty and homelessness are forcing people into a constant state of stress, which requires them to navigate – often daily – how to stretch their limited resources, afford the basics and nurture the unique needs of their loved ones in such a way that they are connected to their community," said Ms Cattermole.

"Last year our volunteers visited over 318,000 people in their homes to provide assistance and to take the pressure off during these moments of 'choice' – times when they're facing difficult, often impossible decisions. In our campaign we've sought to highlight the heartbreaking decisions people have to make and how Vinnies is there to provide other, more supportive avenues, and a gentle hand up."

Common examples include choosing between food or medicine; paying the power bill to stay warm or buying school shoes that fit the kids; or even seeking refuge from domestic violence or living on the streets.

"Last year Vinnies Victoria provided over \$17.1 million in welfare support for Victorians facing these kinds of choices in their daily lives and that, we feel, is a great community service which our volunteers are committed to upholding," said Ms Cattermole.

"Alarming, though, demand for our services has risen by an average of 40 percent across Victoria in the past three years, and in some areas the rise is as high as 68 percent; so we desperately need the support of generous people who are prepared to give this Winter. Our charity receives less than 1 percent government funding, so our donors really are right there by our side, as partners in the good work we do."

**The community is encouraged to give generously to the 2018 Vinnies Winter Appeal by visiting <https://winterappeal.vinnies.org.au> and to consider becoming a regular giver too, as part of the Vinnies Everyday Kindness program, to ensure their generosity is felt all year round.**

"Winter is much less forgiving than the warmer months. Power bills are higher, winter clothes are more expensive, and the physical implications of sleeping rough or in a car are much, much worse. Aside from the material aid people need, they also need our compassion and support more than ever. Your gift to Vinnies this winter will help to ensure our volunteers are there," said Ms Cattermole.

Vinnies volunteers spend time with people face to face to provide a listening ear during times of crisis and that, according to its team of over 12,000 dedicated volunteers in Victoria, is often the link vulnerable people so desperately need to recover and rebuild their lives.

“We believe that every single person, no matter what set of circumstances they find themselves in, should have a choice to exit the cycle of poverty and homelessness – without judgement. Give generously and help Vinnies volunteers to give them that choice.”

Visit <https://winterappeal.vinnies.org.au> for more information about the 2018 Vinnies Winter Appeal or to donate generously to support people like Jenny, living with impossible choices every day.

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#### **ABOUT THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY:**

The St Vincent de Paul Society and its wide network of members and volunteers provide practical frontline support, advocacy and friendship for the most vulnerable members of our community. Key services include home visitation; Vinnies Shops; youth programs; soup vans; assistance for asylum seekers and refugees; compeer programs for people experiencing mental illness; education and tutoring; and professional accommodation and health services through VincentCare. The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia has more than 60,000 members and volunteers. Internationally, the Society operates in 149 countries and has over 950,000 members. To find out more visit [www.vinnies.org.au](http://www.vinnies.org.au).